

You close up your laptop on this fine rainy day, this day of fine drizzle, and walk around your apartment a little bit. Not enough movement today. You get your raincoat and umbrella, put the umbrella down to put the raincoat on -- your mind is fuzzed from editing. You pick up the umbrella and open the door of your apartment, step outside and open your umbrella, and shut the door and lock it, and walk down the street.

There's no guilt in life. A lifetime ago, people felt guilt. But not anymore. Things are unhealthy or not, but there's no guilt. You wonder about this. "Maybe we should feel guilt", you think. "Maybe I should. Maybe when I do the wrong thing, I should feel guilt." But the thought doesn't stick.

Your mind has plenty of other things to go through as you go around the block and up the boulevard and down the avenue and around the other block and back. Soon, of course, you find yourself at...

MITZI's CAFE

Where there, sitting reading a book, is Brian.

(waiting for margot episode four starring YOU as BRIAN, YOU as JULIA, YOU as YOU... and YOU as...)

As you walk in, a man leaves the counter with his coffee and walks toward Brian,

on his way to an empty table. You stand in line for your own drink, green tea. Behind you, you hear them talking.

MAN: What are you reading?

BRIAN: Just some philosophy.

MAN: Are you a philosophy student?

BRIAN: Um, yeah, I guess, not at a university though.

MAN: You didn't want to give me the wrong impression and I appreciate that. I remember when I was younger, I used to read philosophy. I guess the fact that I don't now means it's pretty irrelevant to me. But maybe it still has something valuable for you.

BRIAN: Yeah, I think it's pretty valuable. Have you heard of *I and Thou*, by Martin Buber?

MAN: No, what's that one about?

BRIAN: It's about how we see people as things, or we see them as people. We see things as mechanisms, or we see holistically.

MAN: Do you need to read the whole book to figure out what you just said, or can I just take what you said and apply it?

BRIAN: Um, well, I think if you read the book, you'll spend more time in the neighborhood of those thoughts.

MAN: Is it a useful book?

BRIAN: I -- don't know. It's useful for writing other books.

MAN: Man, I'm caring about this topic a lot more than I should... well, back to middle age for me!

By now, you've turned around to see him as he walks over to his own table.

You come over to Brian's table.

YOU: Mind if I sit here?

BRIAN: Yes -- go right ahead.

YOU: I see your hair is dry. But you don't have an umbrella that I can see. Did you wear a hat?

BRIAN: Yeah, here it is.

He shows you the hat.

YOU: What do you hope to get out of studying philosophy?

BRIAN: I don't know. On days like today, I don't think I'm getting anything out of anything. I guess that itself is a philosophical topic.

YOU: Feeling nihilistic?

BRIAN: My heart is not nihilistic today, but the rest of me is. No, not my will. My will pushes against the nothing.

YOU: Yeah, rainy days can get to you after a while. At least the reservoirs will get more water.

BRIAN: I don't know if it's rainy weather that does

it. I don't know if there's any meaning to meaningless feelings.

YOU: When I have those feelings, I want there to be something objective for me to believe in. Something outside the world of feelings. Because the meaningless feelings say that they are all there is. You know what I mean?

BRIAN: Yeah, I do. I wish I knew more things objectively.

YOU: You put a lot of things into your head...

BRIAN: But it seems like I end up knowing less. The more possibilities you see, the harder it is to choose just one. Maybe that's my problem. I stay in the intellectual world so much that I can't know anything. If I was active, my limitation would be all the things I wanted to change in the world. But, to be honest, I don't want to change things in the world. I've thought about this many times, and I want to want to change things in the world, but I have no natural desire to do so. So the only thing to do is to keep studying philosophy.

YOU: Yeah, you can't do much about necessity.

BRIAN: That's a philosophical topic...

YOU: Does philosophy connect you with God?

BRIAN: Yeah, it's weird, yes and no. Once I come to understand, or discover, some new thought about God, after an hour or maybe a day, I can no longer believe it. But the process of thinking itself is my connection with God. I used to go to church, but now my whole faith is just me thinking.

YOU: What about how you treat other people?

BRIAN: That's me getting out of the way so that I can think.

YOU: You get out of their way...

BRIAN: Yeah, it's ethical and religious at the same time.

YOU: I like that. You're like a monk.

BRIAN: Yeah, that's true, I am. It's a weird life that I kind of burrowed down into.

YOU: Don't apologize for it. The world we live in needs more people who aren't interested in it.

BRIAN: Why is that?

YOU: The world could get a big head, think it's all that, if nobody ignored it.

BRIAN: Huh, I guess that makes sense.

YOU: You know me as an atheist, right?

BRIAN: Yeah, I guess so. I don't know if I know you at all, but I know that that's how you've identified.

YOU: Right. Well, I'm still an atheist. But, I was with an old friend the other day, and, I think I had a religious experience. On a jetski.

BRIAN: Oh wow, I haven't ridden on a jetski since I was in high school.

YOU: I know. It was an experience.

BRIAN: But you're still an atheist?

YOU: Yeah, the experience left me...

BRIAN: But you might want something objective.

YOU: I would like something objective, on a rainy day like this.

BRIAN: I've got some good philosophy for you. It sounds like you had a meaningful experience, and meaning can only come from God.

YOU: Do you believe that?

BRIAN: I want to, but I don't.

YOU: Because it doesn't add up philosophically? How does your argument work?

BRIAN: If something speaks to you, it has to be capable of communicating. What was the meaningful thing? Was it the person you were with?

YOU: No, it was the whole moment.

BRIAN: So then, how could all those things come together into meaning for you?

YOU: In my brain, I guess. I created the meaning.

BRIAN: But then the moment itself wasn't what was meaningful, full of meaning.

YOU: Maybe "that spoke to me" and "meaningful" are metaphors.

BRIAN: But you connected with a reality outside

yourself.

YOU: Yeah. That's true, I definitely did.

BRIAN: And that reality was the whole moment.

YOU: Yeah, that's true. So I guess God could speak a whole moment to me?

BRIAN: Yeah, that's the idea.

YOU: It's certainly a beautiful thought.

BRIAN: But you don't believe, and I don't believe.

YOU: No, I think I can feel the belief from that experience coming back. It's like a shift in the wind.

BRIAN: But is it something objective?

YOU: I don't know. It's real, though. I think it really exists, even if it's not objective.

BRIAN: That's an interesting thought.

YOU: The thing is, can it help with the terror of death.

BRIAN: You feel that too?

YOU: Not all the time. And when I get caught up in something, like talking, or believing, like right now, I don't feel it as much.

BRIAN: Because God is speaking to you.

YOU: Yeah, but when I think that God is speaking to me, the words kind of die inside me.

BRIAN: Yeah, same here.

YOU: Huh. Well, maybe I'll have another experience like at the reservoir.

BRIAN: You could go out in the rain and get blown around.

YOU: Get my feet wet...

BRIAN: Some kind of surprise, some kind of risk. The stakes for existence go up, and you get more interested in existence, open up to it more, trust it more. And so then it means more to you.

YOU: But I'm not going skydiving.

BRIAN: Yeah, you don't have to go skydiving. I doubt that skydiving would be as meaningful as getting surprised by the wind while walking out on a rainy day. The skydiving is such an industrial form of risk-taking.

YOU: But if I had to jump out of a plane that was going down...

BRIAN: That would be very meaningful and not something you would ever want to do again. A very unique event. And I think uniqueness makes things real.

YOU: That sounds true.

BRIAN: But skydiving will always be meaningful on a different level. I think everything we perceive conveys meaning. Even static on a TV screen.

YOU: You remember static?

BRIAN: I do remember.

YOU: I forget about younger people sometimes, what they've experienced.

BRIAN: Yeah, that's fine. It doesn't come up that much between us.

YOU: That's true.

BRIAN: (yawns) I'm tired but it's not late at all.

YOU: Some days are like that for me, too.

BRIAN: I think I haven't been moving around enough.

YOU: Yeah, that can help. I went out for a walk before I came here.

Julia enters the cafe.

JULIA: I'm wet!

She is.

Her hair is, at least. She must have dashed from the cafe's parking lot to the door.

She orders an iced Vietnamese coffee, talks to Joe the barista, gets the coffee, and comes over to sit with you and Brian.

JULIA: I love the rain!

BRIAN: What do you love about it?

JULIA: Are you going to turn this into philosophy?

BRIAN: It probably would have turned out that way. But we can avoid the general, invisible world if you want. Just talk about your experiences.

JULIA: I love how it makes puddles in the street, and how it cleans the air. And how it makes the rooftops *thunder*.

BRIAN: It puts some energy into you.

JULIA: It does! When I was a teenager, I used to go outside in the first rain of the season and dance around.

BRIAN: So did I.

JULIA: You can dance?

BRIAN: No, but I did.

JULIA: Beth, did you do that when you were a teenager?

YOU: No, I stayed inside.

JULIA: Did you live in the Wonderland when you were growing up?

YOU: No, I moved here as an adult.

JULIA: Okay, that's the reason.

YOU: Yeah, I came from somewhere where it rained more often. So it wasn't as special.

JULIA: Isn't it weird how the past fades? If we could remember our laughter in 20 years, we would be cut to the heart.

BRIAN: Yes.... wait, is that a quote from something?

JULIA: No, but it should be. I was being a playwright.

BRIAN: But you weren't being a realistic playwright. That wasn't realistic dialogue.

JULIA: But it came from the heart. Maybe I should be a playwright.

YOU: Is that your past right now?

JULIA: No. My past is that I was a cashier at the grocery store for 12 years and then I was unemployed for 10 months. I'm still pretty young.

BRIAN: But you could have been a playwright?

JULIA: No, I could never be a playwright.

BRIAN: Did you hate your life?

JULIA: No. Would you hate that kind of life? How do you afford your philosophical lifestyle? Do you have a job?

BRIAN: My parents died and left me some money, and I live simply.

JULIA: Don't you want a job?

BRIAN: Yes, I do. But I have no interest for it. I'm low on interest in things.

JULIA: You're a philosopher, yeah? That makes sense. You're trapped doing the thing you love, forced to be who you are.

BRIAN: You're being a playwright again.

JULIA: And why not? If I speak the lines of plays, memorize them, drink them into my brain, why can't I be a playwright? I am an actor, but I become a writer. O Brian, take my hand and let yon rain be ours tonight!

BRIAN: What's happening to you?

You see something strange and eternal in
Julia's eyes.

JULIA: I get connected to strange things sometimes. I don't always understand what they are.

YOU: I was telling Brian about the other day when I went to the reservoir and rode around on a jetski with my friend.

JULIA: And it was something like that?

YOU: Yeah, it was.

JULIA: Something is moving. Maybe it's the universe.

YOU: Maybe it's a playwright, speaking our lines to us.

BRIAN: Do you believe in fate?

YOU: I do. I don't want to, but I do.

BRIAN: What are we doing inside this cafe?

JULIA: I don't want to die...

YOU: I think we are caught up in something...

JULIA: Maybe Joe can help us...

JOE: Yeah, what's up?

JULIA: Joe, come over here and make sure we aren't hypnotizing each other.

JOE: Now, I don't know anything about hypnosis, ma'am.

JULIA: Stop pretending, Joe, everyone knows about hypnosis in this town.

JOE: Ma'am, have you been drinking?

JULIA: Only as prescribed!

You and Brian are beginning to get some air and look at each other in a bewildered way.

JOE: I'm going to have to cut you off.

JULIA: One more drink!

JOE: No, ma'am, that's final.

He slams the table.

And the spell is broken.

JOE: Ha, that was fun, that was like an acting scene, right?

JULIA: Ha ha (forcedly) yeah!

JOE: Man, that was some improv!

He goes back behind the counter.

JULIA: (in a lower voice, fully out of Joe's earshot)
Oh God. He doesn't realize it, because his past changed right when he hit the table. But during that scene he was in it as much as I was.

BRIAN: You can see people's pasts change?

JULIA: Once you've seen both sides of something, you get new eyes.

YOU: Are you okay? You look.... haunted.

JULIA: These things come and go.

You gently touch her shoulder and feel
her relax a little.

YOU: What kind of universe do we live in?

JULIA: It happens. The universe guides us, speaks to us, and makes everything happen to us.

Your hand returns.

BRIAN: Are you hungry?

JULIA: Yes, how did you guess? Oh, because you were hungry, right. Beth, you're hungry, too?

You can see Joe snacking as she speaks.

YOU: Should we order food here or go somewhere else?

JULIA: I think we should stay hungry.

BRIAN: Why do you say that?

JULIA: I don't know why, but it's the right thing to do.

You all understand without understanding, and sit quietly, looking through the cafe windows at the cars getting through the rain.

BRIAN: Sometimes I wonder about the nature of reality. I guess you do too, Julia.

JULIA: Yeah, but from a different angle than you do.

"Silence for half an hour"

Or for less time...

You breathe, at first to calm down, and then just to breathe and then you forget that you breathe, as you speak.

YOU: That playwright, where do they get their inspiration?

BRIAN: The one that was speaking through us?

YOU: Yeah.

BRIAN: I don't know. Maybe there's some kind of important project they're working on, and that forces them to make moves in the world.

JULIA: These things don't have a purpose.

BRIAN: Maybe they're just displays of power?

JULIA: I used to like power, but I don't like it the older I get.

BRIAN: Have you ever had a weird feeling that was definitely you feeling weird?

JULIA: Yes. It's different than how that felt, but similar.

BRIAN: Maybe the playwright has weird feelings and it comes out in what they have us say. Maybe weird feelings are a property of being a creative person.

JULIA: Now you're talking philosophy!

YOU: So it's like they're sharing their life with us...

BRIAN: Yeah. That could be.

JULIA: So are we talking about God now? What about the universe? Can we make a theory for that?

BRIAN: Maybe the universe produces random psychic forces which play out in our personal beings.

JULIA: That sounds more like it. I think the universe explains this better than God does.

BRIAN: Does that mean God doesn't exist?

JULIA: You tell me, philosopher! Are we flirting?

BRIAN: We certainly have chemistry.

JULIA: Okay, yeah. Chemistry. That's okay. I can always find a date.

YOU: Brian, how does meaning play into this?

JULIA: Meaning?

BRIAN: We were talking about some thoughts I've been having about meaning, before you came in.

JULIA: What kind of thoughts?

BRIAN: Mainly about how meaning is something spoken by God. God speaks meaning and his body is what we find meaningful. God's body is what he speaks, and everything we perceive is part of God's body.

JULIA: So my body is part of God's body?

BRIAN: All of you is. God speaks each of us to each other.

JULIA: So then, the universe could be something spoken by God.

BRIAN: Right, and then it would be meaningful.

JULIA: What if the universe was personal? Could it be meaningful by itself?

BRIAN: If the universe was personal, then it would be God.

JULIA: So maybe God and the universe are the same thing...

YOU: The question is, what is the character of the universe, if the universe is personal? How does that compare to the character of God?

BRIAN: Yeah, if the universe is something spoken by God, maybe God has a different personality than what the universe makes it seem like.

JULIA: Like, his body is messed up?

BRIAN: Yeah.

JULIA: So then how do you know anything about him?

BRIAN: He feels our pain, because he speaks it to us. He endures us instead of shutting us all down. I think he loves us.

YOU: So, what is love?

JULIA: That's a good question. When I was younger, I thought I knew, but now, I still think I know, but I know I could be wrong about that.

BRIAN: Maybe the experience we had was God's desire for intimacy, expressed through his broken body.

JULIA: That's a theory.

YOU: Yeah. That's quite a theory.

JOE: Guys, I've been listening in to your story a little (pardon my dropping of the eaves!) and I think I can speak on behalf of Mitzi's and say, have some cookies. You all have been through a lot.

He gives each of you a chocolate chip cookie.

JULIA: Should we break our fast?

YOU: What do you think, Brian?

BRIAN: No, let's wait a while.

YOU: Okay.

JULIA: Okay.

And you sit and wonder what to do. No board game is appropriate, and no words come. Joe leaves you alone, and other patrons enter the cafe. You look at the art on the walls and out at the traffic going by in the street, at the people walking past. And then slowly the moment shifts and you three enter a new context, and shift and enter a new context after that, and shift in your seats.

BRIAN: Now do we eat?

JULIA: Okay.

YOU: Okay.

You eat the cookies, washing them down with the remains of your drinks.

A car honks outside, and the rain begins to let up.

[closing theme]

WAITING FOR MARGOT

Episode 4 "Brian"

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COMMENTS

1.

BRIAN: But you connected with a reality outside yourself.

YOU: Yeah. That's true, I definitely did.

BRIAN: And that reality was the whole moment.

YOU: Yeah, that's true. So I guess God could speak a whole moment to me?

Beth is thinking quickly and filling in gaps in Brian's argument. To expand: A moment speaks to you because it is part of a speaker. Really it is a speaker who is speaking to you, through all the things that speak to you. What you experience of each person are their phenomena, which are part of God's body. The moment itself doesn't necessarily have its own independent intellect, yet it speaks, as it is a part of God who contains it and speaks it.

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